

Message Text

SECRET

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17

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 OMB-01 SAM-01 AID-05 EA-07 DHA-02 ORM-02

SCA-01 ACDA-05 EB-07 SAJ-01 /118 W

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R 201625Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3671

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MADRID

COMSIXTHFLT

CINCUSNAVEUR

S E C R E T ALGIERS 0124

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, AG, MO, SS

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS MOHAMED ABERKANE JAN. 19, HE EXPRESSED ALGERIAN UNHAPPINESS WITH OUR POSITION ON SAHARA WITH CONSIDERABLE VEHEMENCE. I HAD STARTED CONVERSATION BY NOTING UNFAVORABLE ALGERIAN PRESS COMMENT ABOUT VISIT OF TWO U.S. DESTROYERS TO TANGIER AND SAID PRESUMED THEY WOULD BE EVEN UNHAPPIER WHEN THEY LEARNED COMSIXTHFLT VISITING MOROCCO VERY SOON. AS EVIDENCE OUR IMPARTIALITY WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO ARRANGE VISIT TO ALGERIA OF ANY AND ALL UNITS OF SIXTH FLEET PLUS COMSIXTHFLT AT TIME OF ALGERIAN CHOOSING. WHAT WERE PROSPECTS?

2. ABERKANE SAID IF WE WERE GIVING ALGERIA SAME SUPPORT WE GIVING MOROCCO THIS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. ALGERIANS DID NOT EXPECT US TO BE PRO-ALGERIAN IN DISPUTE BUT THEY HAD EXPECTED US AT LEAST TO BE NEUTRAL AND NOT BE PARTISANS OF MOROCCO.

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3. I EXPLAINED AGAIN THAT WE HAD IN FACT BEEN ESSENTIALLY NEUTRAL AND THAT VOTE FOR TUNISIAN-SENEGALESE RESOLUTION MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IN ITS CONTEXT. WHEN WE HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO FREINDS, ONE OF WHOM WAS SPONSORING RESOLUTION AGAINST OUR VITAL INTERESTS IN PLACES LIKE VIRGIN ISLANDS AND KOREA, IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT WE WOULD VOTE FOR RESOLUTION FAVORABLE TO THE OTHER. ALGERIANS MIGHT FIND THIS REPREHENSIBLE, BUT THEY SHOULD REALIZE THAT THERE WAS STRONG AND UNDERSTANDABLE SENTIMENT FOR RETRIBUTIVE POLICIES AMONG PEOPLE OF THE U.S. THIS WAS ONE OF THE POLITICAL REALITIES THEY WOULD HAVE TO LIVE WITH.

2. ABERKANE ENGAGED IN SOME POLEMICS ABOUT U.S. PRESSURES ON SMALL COUNTRIES WHICH DID NOT VOTE SAME WAY IT DID IN UN AND SAID THAT WAY HAD BEEN OPEN FOR MUCH BROADER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ALGERIA BUT THAT OUR CURRENT POLICIES VIS-A-VIS MOROCCO WERE CLOSING IT. ABERKANE THEN SAID WE REALLY OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP THE SAHARAN REFUGEES IN ORDER CORRECT IMBALANCE. I SAID IT MY UNDERSTANDING FROM HAMDANI THAT AMERICAN RED CROSS WAS IN FACT ALREADY DOING SO. THIS SEEMED TO SURPRISE ABERKANE.

3. I REITERATED FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME OUR LACK OF MATERIAL INTEREST IN SAHARA AND OUR DESIRE THAT OUR FRIENDS SETTLE THIS QUESTION AMONG THEMSELVES. I SAID WHAT WAS NECESSARY WAS THAT TWO SIDES FIND PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM.

4. ABERKANE SAID HASSAN HAD PUT HIS FINGER IN HORNET'S NEST AND WAS GOING TO PAY DEARLY. ALGERIA HAD NO INTENTION ATTACKING HASSAN MILITARILY. QUESTION WAS WHETHER HASSAN, HARRIED BY POLISARIO, WOULD TRY ATTACK ALGERIA, IN WHICH CASE ALGERIANS WOULD HAVE TO RESPOND. I SAID HASSAN WOULD NOT DO ANYTHING SO FOOLISH, AND WE BOTH AGREED IT WOULD BE TRAGEDY FOR TWO SIDES TO GET INTO SHOOTING WAR. I THEN ASKED IF ABERKANE'S REMARKS MEANT THAT IF HASSAN COULD MAKE PEACE WITH POLISARIO THAT WAS END OF PROBLEM AS FAR AS ALGERIANS CONCERNED. ABERKANE SAID ABSOLUTELY.

5. COMMENT: ABERKANE'S STATEMENT ALGERIANS HAD NO INTENTION STARTING HOSTILITIES INTERESTING AND PERHAPS REFLECTS ATTITUDE OF BOUTEFLIKA.

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AT THIS POINT HAVE NO IDEA WHETHER THERE ANY POSSIBILITY OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN MOROCCO AND POLISARIO NOR IS IT CLEAR THAT ABERKANE SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY OF GOA. IT IS INTERESTING, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS SECOND TIME IN MATTER OF DAYS FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAS TALKED IN TERMS IMPLYING THAT ALGERIANS WOULD ACCEPT SETTLEMENT WHICH MOROCCO WOULD WORK OUT WITH SAHRAOUI AND WOULD NOT INSIST ON CREATION OF INDEPENDENT STATE. THERE MAY BE MORE ROOM FOR COMPROMISE

HERE THAN WE THOUGHT.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT REQUESTED ASK AMERICAN RED
CROSS IF IN FACT THEY ARE DONATING ASSISTANCE FOR SAHARAN
REFUGEES AND IF SO IN WHAT AMOUNTS.
PARKER

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NNN

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